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A MANUAL

—OF—

THE ART OF QUESTIONING

—FOR—

TRAINING CLASSES

Compiled from various works and especially from those of

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PREFACE

The need of a book on the art of questioning which should cover the subject adequately and afford sufficient preparation for the examination of training classes has long been manifest. The little treatises of Fitch and Young, excellent in their way, have not been comprehensive enough. By gathering into this volume from various sources all that seemed most worthy of attention and most useful to pupils, it has been attempted to furnish a volume that would cover the subject and afford ample preparation.

Syracuse, N. Y., March 13, 1899

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THE ART OF QUESTIONING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Questioning is perhaps the most valuable of all the teaching devices, and in one way or another it has been employed from quite early times. It was used, to the exclusion of other methods, by Socrates; and with him it was an instrument of discipline, as well as a means of unfolding information to the mind. Its value in restricting thought to one topic at a time doubtless led to its adoption in the preparation of those who were to be admitted into the early church; and, after the Reformation, to the employment of "catechisms" and "question and answer books". The distinct recognition, however, of questioning as a device of great value in education, and one especially suited to the needs of school teaching, seems to have been the outcome of the impetus given to the development of new methods by such men as Pestalozzi, and does not date further back than the beginning of the present century; while its common adoption in practice, and its employment in a deliberate and dexterous way, may be said to be the growth of the last fifty years.

To question a class may seem, to one ignorant of teaching, a very simple thing to do, but it is not so

easy as it looks. Bacon says, "A wise question is the half of knowledge." To question and to question efficiently are two very different things; and so much is involved in the latter that it is really one of the most difficult matters the teacher has to learn. Few things mark off more clearly the able teacher than really felicitons questioning; and in many cases the character and success of the work are determined by it. It must not be supposed, however, that any one can become an expert questioner by merely reading about how it is to be done; here, certainly, "all is but lip-wisdom that wants experience." No device should be more persistently and patiently practised; it should not be taken up in a mechanical half-hearted way, nor should the teacher rest content until he can question easily and skilfully in any direction needed.

The frequent use of questions is absolutely indispensable in the teaching of the young, and no one who has learned to question well, and has realized the value of the process, will ever be likely to give it up. The fault, in the case of many teachers, is that they do not use questioning nearly enough. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that questioning is not, as some would have us believe, the only device to be used in teaching, and is not to be used on all occasions and for all purposes. We do not cut bread with a razor, or prune trees with a sword, useful as the razor or the sword may be in its own particular way.

Valuable as it is, questioning cannot cover the whole work of teaching, and the attempt should not be made to stretch its province in this way. It is the natural complement of lecture and illustration, and should not

usurp their provinces, though it may always in teaching be used advantageously in connection with them. In order that the teacher may learn to recognize where questions may be judiciously employed, he must attend carefully to the results of his efforts, as the necessary insight is mainly the outcome of experience.

Many teachers use questioning as though it were an end in itself, and fail to see that it is easy to overquestion to such an extent as to retard the teaching and smother up the point to be learned in a cloud of answers. This purposeless questioning has done much to bring the device into disrepute. Directly the object is gained, the teacher should pass on. Anything beyond what is necessary for clear understanding and firm grasp only bewilders the children, and darkens what it should illuminate. Not unfrequently, too, in teaching, a large amount of time is wasted in endeavoring to question from children ordinary matters of fact, which they can only learn by being told directly. To question again and again in the hope that the point may be guessed, or arrived at by a process of exhaustion, is to misunderstand completely the use of questioning, and is not only stupid but blame-worthy.

The objections sometimes urged against the use of questions—that they are a round-about and tedious mode of teaching, that they encourage a habit of rash speculation and guessing, that they discourage children by presenting too many difficulties, and so on—are scarcely worth consideration. They arise usually from a misconception of the real nature of questioning, and apply only to its wrong employment or abuse. The fact that such defects are common, is no argument for

the abandonment of the device, but points distinctly to the necessity for learning to question properly.

Questioning properly conducted is neither tedious nor confusing to children. As a matter of fact, they are always pleased to tell what they know; they like to be active, and to have their share in the work recognized. To answer questions is much more engaging work to them than to sit as passive listeners, and they are frequently more keenly alive, and more deeply interested, during questioning than in any other part of the work. As Richter says, "the questions of the teacher find more open ears than his answers." It is the teacher's fault if children feel answering to be a bore or are bewildered by a multiplicity of points of view.

Good questioning is an intellectual exercise valuable to teacher and pupils alike, securing to the latter mental activity and clearness of comprehension, and keeping them constantly in contact with the work. It breaks down the formality of merely didactic teaching, gives a pleasant conversational tone to the lesson by allowing the children their share of the talking, and further it affords them a valuable training in readiness of thought and speech. In fact, questioning may be made one of the most powerful instruments at the teacher's disposal; and this not only from the educative side, but also from the disciplinary point of view. Effectively used it should spur the indolent, stimulate the sluggish, challenge the inattentive, restrain the forward, control the rash, expose the careless, encourage the timid, and help the dull; and at the same time it should fully employ the more intelligent members

of the class in such a way as to make available the knowledge of individuals for the benefit of all.

Nevertheless questioning is not a quick method, albeit a sure one: even where legitimately employed it will usually take more time to question a fact from a child than to tell it to him directly. This has led some teachers, especially in America, to prefer a more direct mode of proceeding. But the longer way round is often the shorter way home. In the one case the child is made to think consecutively, and express his thoughts clearly, and thus his mind is exercised in a way highly conducive to thoroughness; while in the other case he has only to listen, and *this children do very imperfectly*. Even where the teacher's statements are repeated again and again, the pupils are very apt to pick up the words only, and to fail to acquire any real knowledge of the underlying truths.

Skilful questioning depends upon—

1. Accurate and full knowledge on the part of the teacher, so that he may know exactly what to ask for, without having to pause or put several questions where one would do, and may see readily how best to bring out the relative bearing and importance of the various facts.

Want of knowledge is not so common as want of thoroughness. The teacher often knows his facts from one side, but thinks only in the words he has been accustomed to, and finds great difficulty in turning his points round and round so that the children may arrive at clear and full ideas.

2. Power to analyze rapidly any subject which

needs to be broken up, and to simplify difficulties by directing attention only to as much at a time as the children are able to grasp.

Want of analytical power is a frequent failing in inexperienced teachers, arising generally from want of practice, coupled with defective observation, and the habit of accepting things without any apprehension of the difference between a general truth and the particulars upon which it is founded, or by which it may be illustrated.

3. Knowledge of the pupils, their needs, power, and previous acquirements; as well as of the way in which their minds may be best made to work in storing and in giving out information.

The more thoroughly the teacher knows those under his charge, the more judiciously directed and the more exactly suited to the needs of the case the questioning will be, the more easily will he detect the exact nature of any difficulty which the answering shows to exist, and the more effective will be his mode of overcoming it.

4. Experience in the use of the device, so as to be able to question with ease, variety, and certainty, and to recognize intuitively when to stop.

It is astonishing how few young teachers question well, or realize the importance of putting out all their energies to improve in this very essential part of their work. Purposeless questioning is one of the commonest of faults.

5. Mental quicksightedness and good judgment, which enable the teacher to rise above a mere mechanical following of rules.

Tact is necessary at all points in deciding what to do and what to leave undone; as well as readiness of resource in seizing upon points of vantage, in "adapting the means to varying and unforeseen circumstances", and in making the most profitable use of whatever may be given by the children in the way of answers.

6. **Brightness of manner,** and such strong sympathy with children that they feel the stimulus and enter into their share of the work with eagerness.

Many a teacher's work is marred by hesitancy and heaviness of manner. Few things damp the natural vivacity of children more effectually; to keep them active and full of ardor is half the battle, and this is especially true in the employment of questioning.

7. **Readiness of expression** so as exactly to suit the questions to those under instruction, and to vary the form of a question on the instant if necessary.

Ease in framing questions in a simple, brief, and direct way tells powerfully towards success in teaching, but it demands much quickness of appreciation and skill in the use of words. Teachers frequently fail in these particulars, and the questions are consequently clumsily-worded or round-about, and the exercise becomes slow and uninteresting.

CHAPTER II

KINDS OF QUESTIONS

It is quite common, in the treatment of questions from the theoretical standpoint, to find a more or less minute classification of them given, in which certain names are applied to the various groups according to the slightly different objects with which they are employed. Thus at different times, though by no single writer, questions used in particular ways have been called preliminary, tentative, testing, assaying, recapitulatory, examinatory, experimental, catechetical, educative, Socratic, illustrative, instructive, etc. Some of these terms are of course but different names for the same thing; but any such elaborate scheme as is here referred to is of no practical value; in fact it is apt to confuse rather than assist the teacher, and tends to cloud over the essential features which mark the two great and distinct classes, viz., *Testing Questions* and *Training Questions.* These differ in their nature, their aim, and their mode of use; and for the ordinary purposes of teaching it is helpful, and it is sufficient, to consider all questions as belonging to one or other of these groups.

1. Testing questions.—The distinguishing mark of testing questions is that they seek to secure from the child the re-expression of something he is supposed to have learned—either during the lesson, or previously

—in order that he may know it more securely by having again to direct his attention to it, and in many cases by being made to state it in his own words. They demand for the most part an effort of memory in supplying the ideas asked for; and though the answers may necessitate clear understanding and some exercise of judgment, yet such questions turn the child's thoughts in a backward direction, and set him seeking for what is wanted among facts he has already acquired. It must not be supposed that questions of this kind do not require thought in order to answer them well, but they do not involve the discovery of anything new to the child. They should represent the ideas in the most natural order, and as far as possible cement them together in such a way as to form a coherent body of information; so that the recollection of them may be aided by the influence of that "*association*" which acts so powerfully in the case of memory.

Nothing tells the teacher more about his work, or may be made more helpful in pointing out where his practice needs amendment, than a judicious use of questions. They test the *quality* of the teaching, by showing him how far the facts given have been well learned, and in what manner they are arranged in the child's mind; and they further afford the teacher actual proof of the *amount* of information which has been gained.

Testing questions, then, ask directly for facts, and bring them to light again for various reasons and purposes. The chief of these are the following:—

(*a*) **At the opening of a lesson** they enlighten the teacher as to what knowledge the children possess.

either of a related or similar kind, which may be made the ground-work of the teaching; and show him not only how much it will be wise to attempt, but also where best to begin. They help the children to discriminate between what they know and what they do not know, and by thus defining the limits of the known enable them to make the passage to the unknown with greater certainty and success. Skilfully used such preliminary questions turn the minds of the scholars into the right groove, as it were, prepare them for what the teacher is going to say, and set them fairly on their course. They open up a subject by showing in what direction learning is to take place, arouse a desire for knowledge by exciting interest and curiosity, and stimulate the children by affording a glimpse of possibilities.

(*b*) **During the teaching** testing questions are in a high degree useful in directing the thought and effort of the children, and in banishing any haziness of conception or inaccuracy of apprehension; while at the same time they form the most serviceable and trustworthy means which the teacher has at his disposal of discovering how far he has been understood, and the cause of any failure which may become apparent. He is thus able to determine readily where his work has been too difficult, too vague, or too hurried; and is led to see in what direction increased caution is necessary, what gaps leading to error have to be stopped, what weak places need strengthening, or where further explanation or illustration is required. Such questioning also affords him opportunities of putting misconceptions right; and offers him a safe guide, not only

as to whether the lesson is level with the child's comprehension, but also as to the speed with which the teaching should be given.

Frequently, *before an explanation* is given, a few questions are valuable to prepare the children's minds for what is coming, to narrow the mental view to the single difficulty in hand, to remove obstacles to understanding, and to enable the teacher to make out the best mode of approach. Unless the children are thus led to appreciate the nature of the difficulty, and to feel their want, the explanation is apt to be unheeded. "Food proffered where there is no appetite is nauseating; information proffered prematurely is worse than wasted."

(*c*) **At the end of the lesson** questioning may be employed with great advantage for the purpose of fixing the facts taught, of making good the connection between them, and of giving emphasis to the most important points in such a way as to put the whole into proper perspective. It is astonishing how little of a lesson children remember, even when well taught, and how fragmentary and unsatisfactory their information soon becomes, unless it is tested and impressed again and again by rapid, searching, and vigorous questioning in the way of recapitulation or review. In many cases they fail to grasp the facts even at the time, and the systematic employment of testing questions at stated periods in the lesson affords the best means of supplying deficiencies and of correcting errors. It is never safe to assume that children know what they are supposed to have learned until it has been proved by questioning.

The practice of frequently testing knowledge by questioning is valuable from both the point of view of learning and that of discipline. If the child knows he will be required to give back what has been presented to him he is much more likely to listen attentively than where such exercise is omitted. To be of use, however, testing questions must be sufficiently searching to determine how far the child has understood and remembered what has been taught, and must not be confined to asking merely for a few points which even inattentive children can give.

(*d*) **For examination** these are of course the kind of questions used.

2. Training questions.—The chief characteristic of training questions is that they seek to lead the child to discover new facts for himself by guiding him through easy processes of thought or reasoning. That which is known is used as material out of which, by suitable treatment, fresh ideas may be developed. The old information is brought to light that new may be evolved out of it, the one leading up to and into the other. Training questions thus involve a seeking forward, not backward. They may be said to put information *into* the mind, and this in such a way as to call out into active exercise such powers as the child possesses. It is therefore easy to see why such questions have been termed educative or instructive. They are also illustrative, inasmuch as they throw light on what is known, and this in a manner calculated to bring out all it implies and show its bearings in relation to other matters. It is also clear that they cannot be used in all cases, but only where an extension of the child's

knowledge, or power, can be secured by his own efforts, without direct communication from the teacher.

In the earlier stages, before the child can be properly said to be able to reason, training questions should be mainly directed to the eliciting of relationships between the facts which are brought before him, these involving for the most part only such matters as can be observed; or interdependence of the simplest kind as cause and effect.

In the later stages of a child's school career the great use of training questions is to present easy steps of analysis until a general conclusion can be reached; or to elicit inference after inference in a way which will lead to the appreciation of logical connection, and exercise the pupil in continuous thinking. A most valuable training of the intelligence is thus secured; and all investment in intellectual activity will pay a dividend. Nothing encourages a child more than to show him how much he can accomplish for himself, if he puts out his strength in the right way. The conquest of difficulty invigorates him; and what he thus learns has a fuller meaning for him, and is much more permanent, than what he is simply told.

The comparative neglect into which training questioning has fallen is doubtless to be traced to the craving for putting everything into a cut-and-dried form, so that it may be ready for easy quotation during examination. It is urged, and correctly so far, that training questioning is not an *easy and expeditious* means of storing information; but it is deplorable that this latter should be made almost the only end of education. "The time spent in questioning with a view to

train cannot be spent in carting in knowledge with a view to turn it out again on demand."

The success with which training questions are employed will depend largely on the teacher's skill in suggesting lines of search, and in keeping the inquiry within proper limits. He has to stimulate the children to make the necessary effort, and to give help judiciously where a difficulty presents itself too great for them to overcome unaided. He must be perfectly clear as to what he wishes to arrive at, and must put his questions in such a way as to lead in the right direction. The most consummate adroitness is sometimes necessary in order to carry out these points efficiently.

Socratic questioning and training questioning are often spoken of as though the two terms were in all respects synonymous; and specimens of Socratic dialogue are frequently given, as though by imitation of these a correct method would be arrived at for use with children. But anything like a careful examination of the dialogues given by Plato and Xenophon will surely reveal how completely unlike, in most cases, the method is to proper training questioning *for children*. Commonly the teacher is not even warned that there are two very distinct phases of the Socratic method—the ironical one, and the developing one. True, the *principle* of the latter is a correct one in ordinary teaching, aiming as it does at giving birth to mental activity and discovery by the pupil himself; but even here it is the principle itself which is of value, not the way in which Socrates employed it, and the teacher who fashioned his teaching upon the model of Socrates's

ordinary method of procedure would almost inevitably go wrong.

Socrates had not the spirit of a teacher of little children, and judging from his practice as we know it he would certainly in that capacity have been a failure. He usually *drove* his hearers to the conclusion he wanted; it is the business of the teacher of children to *guide and lead*, and they require much more help and direct explanation, interspersed with the questions, than the ordinary Socratic dialogue would give.

Socrates was in almost all cases dealing with adults, and often well-trained and acute adults, so that in many instances he directed his questioning to convict them of ignorance, or to confound them by leading them into difficulties. His method was frequently subtle and artful; and he was not above leading his interlocutor astray in order to entrap him and jeer at his confusion. Now surely all this is wrong in dealing with children. Except in the rare case of a rash and conceited pupil, we do not want to disconcert them by convincing them how ignorant they are, and how valueless is what they know; but rather by our questioning to make clear to them how far they know accurately, and show them what they need. With children employment of ridicule at all needs careful management, and it should form no regular part of a method of teaching.

Apart even from the objectionable features mentioned, the Socratic method, if carried out in detail, is too negative in character, and gives far too little information, to be suitable for common use in schools. Employed, however, in a kindly way, for a special pur-

pose, and with discrimination by a skilled teacher, the method may be used occasinally with good effect. Fitch, in his "Art of Questioning" (pp. 53–55) gives an excellent example of the power of Socratic questioning. The following dialogue from Mr. Thring's Theory and Practice of Teaching is an admirable instance of this. Perhaps the most useful point for the teacher to remember about the Socratic dialogue is its *sequence and connection*—the cross examination to bring out the truth without any break in thought.

Master.—Did you ever hear of Fortunatus's purse?

Boys (two or three).—Oh yes, it always had money in it.

M.—Would you like to have one?

B.—I should just think so, rather.

M.—Why don't you get one?

B.—Oh, it's only a Fairy-story; don't I wish I could!

M.—What! you don't mean to say you don't believe it?

B.—Of course not. Who believes in Fairy-stories?

M.—I do: really, now, don't you know where the purse hangs?

B. (quite puzzled).—No.

M.—Fairy purses hang on the Fairy-tree, to be sure; I have one.

B. (incredulous).—You don't say so?

M.—But I do (pulling out a shilling); that came from it.

B. (very much taken aback).—Are you serious?

M.—Quite serious. Where did this shilling come from?

B.—Oh, it's yours.

M.—No doubt. I did not steal it, I hope, but how did it become mine?

B.—Oh, I suppose you were paid for keeping school.

M.—Well, why don't you keep school? You told me you would like some money.

B.—I can't.

M.—Why not?

B.—I don't know enough.

M.—Oh! but what has that to do with it?

B.—Of course you must have knowledge to keep a school.

M.—Indeed! Do you mean to tell me that my knowledge turned into money!

B.—Yes.

M.—What! This shilling part of a Greek verb?

B. (laughing).—I suppose so.

M.—What are you, pray, doing here?

B.—Oh! we come to learn.

M.—Not to get knowledge, surely?

B.—Of course we do, though.

M.—You don't mean to say you are climbing the tree of knowledge?

B. (twinkling somewhat).—Well! I suppose so.

M.—To go back: Where does the Fairy-tree grow?

B. (promptly).—In Fairy-land, to be sure.

M.—You forget. I said I had climbed it.

B. (dubiously).—No, I don't. Is it the tree of knowledge?

M.—Where did my shilling come from ?

B.—From the knowledge you have.

M.—But where does the Fairy-purse hang ?

B.—You told me on the Fairy-tree.

M.—But the shilling came from the Fairy-purse.

B.—O-o-h-h! !

M.—And *you* agreed that the Fairy-purse hangs on the Fairy-tree. Now, what is the Fairy-tree ?

B.—It is the tree of knowledge.

M.—And *you* told me that the Fairy-tree *of course* grew—in ?

B.—O-o-h-h! Fairy-land.

M.—And Fairy-land is ?

B. (many broad grins).—School.

Ellipses.—By an ellipsis in teaching is meant the omission of one or more words at the end of a statement, on the understanding that these missing words are to be supplied by the children. That ellipses may fulfil their object in the best way, they must not be mere chance statements made in the course of the teaching, but must be specially framed to admit of just that being supplied which the teacher wishes to obtain from the children.

The function of ellipses is to a large extent that of easy questions, and they are often employed in questions; but they are sufficiently distinct in form, and have sufficient advantages of their own, to render them worthy of consideration as a separate device.

Advantages.—We owe the introduction of ellipses into common use to David Stow, who made them a part of his system of training. He considered that their employment *along with questions* formed a more efficient instrument for developing the faculties than questions alone. However this may be, at least one thing is certain, that, employed in the right way and with proper restrictions, ellipses may be made of considerable service in teaching. The greater the number of the devices which the teacher can employ readily and effectively, that is, the greater the number of ways he has at his command of doing with skill and certainty what is required of him, the easier will be his work to himself and the more helpful and satisfactory to his pupils. As an illustration of Dr. Stow's system, we quote the following from his "Training System" (edition of 1853, pp. 356, 365):

David Stow, 1793-1864

"I must tell you that Saul, the king of Israel, hated David, because he knew that God had chosen David to succeed him, instead of Jonathan, Saul's son. He therefore persecuted David, and sought every opportunity of killing him. David therefore was...*afraid and fled,** but God kept him from...*harm.* And after

* "Every word in italics is supposed to be the answer of the children; the pauses marked thus...show where the trainer forms an ellipsis, which (by the children)

David was saved from his...*enemies*, what did he say? Look at your books...*but the Lord was my stay.* Tell me what the meaning of the word STAY is? What is a stay? (Silent)*

"FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION.—Allow me to ask, have you seen peas growing in a garden? *Yes, Sir.* When the peas were grown a few inches above ground, what have you seen the gardener do to them? *Stick them.* What is the use of sticking them? *To keep them up.* The gardener stayed or supported the...*peas.* One child calls out, *he stayed the pea sticks, Sir.* Think for a moment, children. Did the gardener stay the sticks? *He stayed the peas.* Well, then, the gardener stayed or supported the peas by...*sticks.* Each stick that supported or held up one of the peas, was to that pea—

---

is afterwards answered and filled up by the words in italics. While in the initiatory, or earliest stage, a single word or at most only two are left out, but which must of course embody the meaning of the sentence, else an ellipsis would be a mere guess, and not training; yet as the children advance in knowledge and facility of expression, several words at a time may be left out. These ellipses fill in the innumerable interstices which no direct questions can supply."

*"Unless the children have committed to memory some technical answer, generally speaking, they will remain silent. The trainer, therefore, may put the question in two, or three, or more forms, before he receives, or even expects an answer—each question being more and more simple and apposite, and each, of course, exercising the understanding of his pupils."

What was it? *A stay.* The pea, you know, has little fibres, called...*tendrils;* you remember we had a gallery lesson upon creeping plants lately. The pea seizes hold of the...*sticks* with...*its tendrils.*

"Are the peas able to stand upright of themselves like a tree? *They are weak—they have sticks.* Very weak, and they would fall if they had no sticks to... *keep them up.* Very right. The pea requires something to keep it...*from falling.* And without being stayed it ...*would not grow.* Would it not grow? *It would not grow up.* It would...*fall.* Tell me now what the stick is to the pea? *A stay.* A staff to an old man on which he leans is...*a stick.* Very true, it is a stick; but the stick or staff to him is...*a stay*—it...*keeps him up.*

"And when the wall of a house threatens to fall, and beams of wood are placed against it to...*keep it up*—what are these beams called? *They are thick.* True, they are thick, but what are they to the house? (No answer.)* The stick kept the pea from...*falling.* What do the beams to the wall? *Keep it from falling.—Stays. Sir.*

"Anything on which we lean, or cling to for support may be called...*a stay.* If any of you children are acquainted with ships, you will know that part of the rigging is supported by stays. *I know about ships, master, my grandfather lives at the sea-side.* Very well, boy, you can tell what the rigging of a vessel is stayed by? *Ropes.* The ropes tied up in a particular way by... Whom? *The sailors*—keep up the...*sails* and other

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*"The trainer must now go over the outlines of the former illustrations."

parts...*of the rigging.* What do you call the ropes when used in this way? *Stays.*

"A staff to an old frail man may be called...*a stay.* And you told me what the pea requires to keep it up? *A stick*—or...*stay.* A beam to the gable of a house likely to fall, what did you say the beam was? *A stay.* You will remember what was said about ivy clinging to trees, and...*bushes;* these trees and bushes were to the ivy...*stays.* Suppose I were weak and unable to stand upon my feet, and some of you held me up, what would you be to me? *A stay.*"

On this subject Young gives some excellent suggestions and illustrations (Art of Putting Questions, pp. 41–46). The following are some of the advantages of ellipses.

1. A framework.—As before mentioned the child's difficulties in answering a question are twofold—the finding of the right idea, and the expression of this in suitable language when found. Now ellipses are purposely framed to remove, as far as needful, one of these difficulties by giving the framework of the reply, so that the mind is left free to exert its power on the discovery of the thought or fact required.

2. They are less formal, and affect the pupils less like a direct challenge, than questions. The teacher seems to the children to take his part more as one of themselves than as one intent upon giving them definite instruction, while his work is brought into such direct contract with theirs that the result appears as a joint effort. Hence ellipses tend to give confidence and encouragement to little children, who are apt to be shy

and timorous when anything is demanded from them in a formal way.

3. The briskness and animation of the exercise are advantages. The ellipses are filled in rapidly and the lesson kept moving; and if they are skilfully put the interest of the children is excited, and consequently their attention arrested. Further, activity and cheerfulness are secured; and, after all, these are two very important things in the case of young children, even if but little information is given.

4. Change and relief from severer questioning are considerations. To continue any one device, no matter how valuable, for too long a time is simply to weary the children; and after more difficult work a short series of ellipses will be found to refresh and brighten the class.

5. Rapid review.—They are useful also in running quickly over a series of points again to bring the latter distinctly before the children's minds before proceeding to some further point, so that the connection may be clear; and in summing up or rapid review they may frequently be made to serve a similar purpose.

6. Simple language-training.—To some extent the employment of ellipses affords a simple and useful training in language. The complete statements accustom the child to correct forms, and serve the purpose pretty much of a series of model answers to more direct and difficult questions which might have been asked. In fact in some cases it is useful, after an ellipsis has been filled in, to put a question demanding the complete statement for answer. By filling in

ellipses, too, the child learns the correct use of the words supplied, and so improves his vocabulary.

Cautions.—The considerations given above lead distinctly to the conclusion that ellipses may be suitably and wisely resorted to as a common device in the teaching of young children; but that the higher we go in the school the less frequent should be their employment, until in the upper classes their use should be confined to special cases, or cease altogether.

With infant classes they form a stirring and encouraging exercise; but, since, as a rule, they demand but little thought, anything like frequent employment with elder classes would lead to a waste of time and eventually to a disinclination to the strenuous and continuous effort to which it is important to accustom older scholars. Much will, however, depend upon the good judgment and skill of the teacher, and it would be unwise to lay down any hard and fast rule as to how far the use of ellipses should extend.

1. Not to be used exclusively.—In no case should the teacher rely solely upon the use of ellipses. If these are employed exclusively, the children soon learn to fill them in mechanically, and a superficiality of attention is engendered, which looks only for the word without proper grasp of the underlying idea. Stow insists very strongly on the constant admixture of questions and ellipses in differing proportions according to the age of the class. Used in connection they assist and support each other.

Stow says: "Questioning is simply developing or leading out. It is not training until the child's ideas

are not merely *led out* by questioning, but *led on* by ellipses and questions combined.....There must uniformly be an analysis, *based on simple familiar illustrations*, and conducted by questions and ellipses mixed, which must be within the extent of the knowledge and experience of the children present."

2. Should both test and train.—In the first case, they must not be given in a haphazard way, but should be expressly framed to elicit what the children have *learned:* for, if they require points upon which no previous teaching has been given, they will not be filled in with the requisite certainty. In the second case, they must be sufficiently easy for each step to be readily followed, so that the children are assisted in reasoning in a very simple way for themselves.

They must not be too easy; the word or words left for the pupils to fill in should necessitate the finding of an idea, and must be sufficiently important to ensure a certain amount of effort. Care should also be taken to avoid the common fault of suggesting too much. In no case should merely half a word be required, so that only the final syllable, perhaps, remains to be given. The difficulty of what is to be supplied will depend upon the class: with the younger children it should be a single and fairly obvious word; with more advanced scholars it may be a more difficult word or phrase.

Vagueness is another fault to be avoided. This is pretty certain to lead to guessing of a useless and harmful kind. If ellipses are so framed that a number of different words may be filled in, and yet make sense of the statement, the definite and uniform answer which

the teacher wants is not forthcoming. Some say one thing and some another, and confusion results.

3. Promptness.—The usefulness of ellipses depends in a great measure on their being filled in simultaneously; hence, except in very special cases, they should be addressed to the class as a whole, and the reply should be given by all. Smartness and movement are essential. If an ellipsis is not filled in, it is rarely of use to put it over again in the same form; as a rule it is better to go back a step and approach the point again in another way.

Ellipses are subject to the same defects, and liable to the same abuses, as questions to which simultaneous answers are expected. Where they are not well employed they lead to much unnecessary noise, and may readily become absolutely worthless. The ease with which they may be used is seductive but delusive, for their skilful employment is much more difficult than it seems; and the show of work made is very apt to deceive the teacher as to the reality of what is done. Unless he is vigilant in looking out for those who do not reply, and listens carefully for imperfect responses, a considerable proportion of the pupils may be mentally idle, and either not take the trouble to answer at all, or trust to their neighbors to give them the cue to the right word. The evil effects of the bad habits thus formed it is unnecessary to dwell upon; but the teacher should be fully alive to the fact that ellipses need quite as much care and judgment to use properly as any other teaching device.

The methods compared.—It will perhaps assist

the clear appreciation of the characteristics of testing and training questions if we map out their chief points of contrast as follows:

Testing Questions	Training Questions
1. Appeal mainly to memory and understanding.	1. Appeal chiefly to reasoning and the conceptive faculty.
2. Turn attention backwards upon the known.	2. Direct attention forwards to the unknown.
3. Travel over ground already surveyed for the purpose of testing the quality and quantity of the work. Discover what the pupil has found out.	3. Carry thought into new regions so as to lead to further acquisition of knowledge. Find out what the pupil can discover.
4. Fix acquired truths by bringing them again to light, and are thus said to question information *out of* the child's mind.	4. Develop new truths out of what is already known, and are thus said to question information *into* the child's mind.
5. Call upon the child to pause and examine what he has acquired.	5. Call upon the child to progress by means of what he has acquired.
6. Demand answers depending upon accurate knowledge and readiness in finding and expressing it.	6. Demand answers depending upon insight and the power of the children to think connectedly.
7. May be employed in connection with all subjects.	7. Are limited in application mainly to matters which can be reasoned out.
8. Enlighten the teacher as to the nature of his success and the value of his method.	8. Enlighten the children as to the bearing and development of what they know.

The chief purposes for which questions may be profitably employed in teaching are the following:

1. To develop information by appealing to the children's reason, previous experience, or present observation. The questioning should give point and meaning to what is already known, and open up a view of the details which probably has not before attracted attention.

2. To test the information supposed to have been gained, either from previous work, or as a result of the teaching given in the lesson, and so to enable the

teacher to adapt his procedure exactly to the requirements of the case.

3. To train the pupils by guiding them through easy processes of observation, thought, or conception; as well as to afford them a useful exercise in rapidity of apprehension, and in ready expression of their ideas with neatness, exactness, and force.

4. To stimulate the pupils to use to the utmost such power as they possess; to awaken curiosity as to coming knowledge, so that they may have a desire to know more; and to increase interest in the work by calling upon them to take their proper share in it.

5. To focus attention and intellectual effort upon one point at a time, and so help the children by directing the mental gaze and excluding the consideration of everything but the matter in hand.

6. To fix the ideas which have been presented to the child by causing them to be again brought into conscious existence in varied form and definite order—through the agency of repetition, recapitulation, or review—a sufficient number of times to secure permanency.

7. To bring out the perspective of facts by dwelling most forcibly upon the more essential matters, and to assist the children in realizing the logical connection and relationship of the ideas.

8. To give variety in the method of teaching, and prevent the deadening effect of sameness of treatment; or possibly to inspirit a flagging class, and give brightness, pleasantness, and "go" to the lesson.

CHAPTER III

FORMS OF QUESTIONS

Questions, as applied to children in teaching, should, as we have seen, turn the mind's energy in one direction, and thus, by narrowing the range of effort, put the pupil in the best position for performing his part in the lesson. They should guide him in his search for new facts, and exact of him in a reasonable way the reproduction of that which he has learned. Hence questions should be—

1. Definite.—A very common defect in questions is their want of definiteness as to what is required. They should ask exactly for what is needed, and nothing but that. Thus, as far as possible, a question should admit of only one answer, and though the teacher may not always be able to reach this standard it should be aimed at. Vagueness in the questions is a great enemy to anything like clear and exact thought on the part of the child. An ambiguous question, to which it is possible for him to give several answers, each of which is a correct reply to the question, is apt to confuse him by the possibilities open to him; and, feeling that the teacher only wants one reply, he either hazards a guess, or lets the opportunity pass in trying to decide what answer to give.

All such ambiguous questions as "What is the river Severn like?" "What sort of story is the one you

have been reading?" "What do they do in quarries?" "What should you say Gibraltar is made of?" "What do we eat to keep us alive?" are to be carefully avoided. They simply diffuse instead of concentrating the child's attention, and serve no useful purpose whatever. Young gives this illustration:

"Who was Joshua?"

"The son of Nun."

"No, no; I mean what was Joshua?"

"The leader of the Israelites."

"Well, yes; but what was he in relation to Moses?"

"He was no relation to Moses, sir."

"Well, but in his office what was he?"

(No answer.)

"Boys! was he not the successor to Moses?"

Then follows a loud "*Yes, sir*", and a considerable confusion and clearing of throats.

Fitch well says (p. 67):

"Vague and indefinite questions, I have always observed, produce three different results, according to the class of children to whom they are addressed. The really thoughtful and sensible boy is simply bewildered by them. He is very anxious to be right, but he is not clear as to what answer his teacher expects; so he is silent, looks puzzled, and is, perhaps, mistaken for a dunce. The bold and confident boy who does not think, when he hears a vague question answers at random; he is not quite sure whether he is right or wrong, but he tries the experiment, and is thus strengthened in a habit of inaccuracy, and encouraged in the mischievous practice of guessing. There is a third class of children whom I have noticed, not very keen, but

sly and knowing nevertheless, who watch the teacher's peculiarities, know his methods, and soon acquire the knack of observing the structure of his sentences, so as to find out which answer he expects. They do not understand the subject so well, perhaps, as many others; but they understand the teacher better, and can more quickly pronounce the characteristic word or the particular answer he expects. Now I do not hesitate to say that, as far as real education and development of thought are concerned, each of these three classes of children is injured by the habit of vague, wide, and ambignous questioning which is so common among teachers."

2. Direct.—Nor must the questions be allowed to wander from the subject, as they are very apt to do unless the teacher has his lesson well in hand, and frames his inquiries to elicit just what he wants. Irrelevant questioning is oftener the result of indolence than of lack of skill. Something more is required in teaching than the loose and indirect form of questioning commonly employed in ordinary conversation, although there should be the same freedom and ease. If the teacher asks questions without knowing where he is going, he will soon find both himself and his children adrift, and no real progress being made.

3. Pointed.—Every question should be of value as a real part of the teaching, and have some distinct bearing and influence on the lesson. Sometimes a number of questions are asked without order, and in an aimless, drifting sort of way, merely to occupy time, or because the teacher feels that some questions ought

to be asked. They begin anywhere and lead nowhere. The utter worthlessness of such questioning has been already referred to.

4. Unequivocal.—If the child is to grasp the bearing of a question readily, it must be unequivocal in meaning, and sufficiently simple both in thought and language. The ideas must be well within the child's comprehension; and so long as clearness is secured, the shorter the question the better.

5. Simply expressed.—In no part of his work is it more worth the teacher's while to be economical of words; and those used must be such as the child is accustomed to, so that whether the answer is forthcoming or not there is no doubt in his mind as to what is asked. There must be no useless verbiage in the way of introductory phrases, no round-about and consequently lengthy statements, and no unnecessary elaboration of idea. It is impossible to get children to think properly when their energies are consumed in endeavoring to unravel the complexity of the question, or to discover its import.

The proper choice of words in asking a question is a point deserving of much attention. Several short questions are better than one long one; and if the teacher finds that he has in his question taken too great a step at once, or has employed words too difficult for the children to understand—as he may easily do, especially in using technical terms—it is better for him to break up his question into easier ones, or to put it into another form, than to fill in the answer himself and pass on.

All such round-about ways of beginning a question

as "Now, my good children....." "I shall be glad if you can tell me ....," "Now, if you try I am sure you will be able to say ....," etc., etc., are to be avoided, not only as a waste of time, but as tending to confuse the child by taking his attention from the point of the question.

Those who are unaccustomed to talk to children often find great difficulty in framing suitable and simple questions, and sometimes fall into ludicrous mistakes. No *teacher* would ever think of asking such a question as the following: "Will you be good enough to tell me, if you happen to remember from what you have been told or from what you have read, under what circumstances mercury placed in a long tube, closed at the upper end, rises or falls?" Such a question is full of faults.

A question may be clear as to meaning, and yet framed in such a clumsy or slipshod way as to be objectionable, especially so when addressed to children. A faulty form, of very frequent occurrence in teaching, is one in which what should be a statement, or an ellipsis, is changed into a question by the addition of some word or phrase that ought in most cases to have come first. The words usually employed for this purpose are *what, when, where, how,* and the like.

For instance: "Falstaff was a very what?" "The man we spoke of went where?" "Botany is the science of what?" "He ascertained which of the two mountains?"

Another rather common error is for the teacher, either from carelessness or from not having thought out his lesson properly, to begin a question and then

to alter the wording, it may be several times: *e. g.* "What is the function of —— what purpose do the leaves serve, of what use are they to the plant?" If a question has been begun wrongly, it is better to abandon it altogether than to patch and alter it until the children are confused.

Sometimes again the mistake is made of welding into one two questions which ought to have been put separately, so that the children are in doubt as to which to answer first, and hence some say one thing some another.

"What part of speech is the word *sailed*, which word does it tell us something about?" "Who won the battle of Hastings, was it really fought at Hastings?" "Where does the river Thames rise, has it more than one source?" are instances, the climax of absurdity being reached in such forms as—"Who dragged whom round the walls of what city, and why?"

6. Requiring effort.—Questions which may be answered without any exercise of mind are not only valueless, but give rise to bad habits, and are apt to delude both the teacher and the children as to the amount learned. At the best they give undue prominence to those who are merely smart and quick, and consequently discourage the thoughtful; while they are almost certain to lead to rash guessing, carelessness, inattention, and superficiality. There are various types of these objectionable questions.

Echo questions.—In some cases the worthlessness of the question arises from the fact that it asks for information which has been given as a statement the

moment before: as, "The Black Forest contains a great many fir-trees. What does the Black Forest contain?" It is very easy for a teacher to get into a habit of using these "echo questions", as they have been termed.

Leading questions should be very rarely if ever employed in teaching. These merely ask for the assent of the pupil to something said by the teacher, or in some way or other suggest what is required.

The clue to the answer may be conveyed to the pupil by the form of the question; by the emphasis laid, consciously or unconsciously, upon some particular word or phrase; by inflection of the voice; or, it may be, by some significant gesture, or the expression of the face. It is astonishing how quick children are in catching any suggestion from one they know, however unintentional it may be, and hence they may appear to answer well when questioned in this way while they really know little or nothing of the subject about which they are being asked. Apart even from any suggestion whatever, or fault in the questioning, they will answer a teacher to whom they are accustomed much more readily than when interrogated by a person whose manner and mode of questioning are quite strange to them.

Such questions as—"Bricks are made of clay, are they not?" "Plants *grow;* what is the difference between a plant and a stone?" "Is not Snowdon a high mountain?" "Does the Ganges enter the ocean by one mouth or by *many channels?*" demand nothing from the child but a little attention.

"Never, if you can help it," says Fitch (p. 61)

"communicate a fact in your question. Contrive to educe every fact from the class." His whole treatment of this subject (pp. 61–66) is most instructive.

An example of stupefying mind by this wrong questioning is given in Page's Theory and Practice, Syracuse edition, page 107.

Yes or no questions.—It is customary to condemn the use in teaching of all questions which require only yes or no for answer (sometimes, but improperly, called "direct" questions); but this general condemnation is too sweeping. Much depends upon whether the question calls for a decision between two alternatives, or does not; the real point is, not whether the answer is "yes" or "no" but whether the question appeals to the child in a useful manner. If, as is commonly the case, questions of this kind are put in such a way that there is practically no doubt as to the nature of the reply expected, and even the most thoughtless can answer them, then by all means they should be avoided by the teacher. Thus it often happens that children know the answer is to be yes if the question ends with the rising inflection, and no if it ends with the falling. Many cases, however, arise in teaching, where a question may only demand "yes" or "no", but to decide correctly which of the two necessitates an exercise of judgment, and it may be a difficult one, on the part of the pupil. There seems to be no reason why such questions should not be used, if judiciously employed, and if guessing is discouraged by frequently following up the reply with other questions respecting the grounds upon which the answer is based.

Sometimes a difficult question of the "yes" or "no" form is used merely to start an inquiry, or to direct attention to and excite an interest in the next point to be considered. The confirmation of either of the possible replies is deferred for the time, and the matter decided by eliciting the facts which justify the one conclusion rather than the other, or by an appeal to experiment, or possibly by the association of both these plans. For instance, the teacher may have been explaining about the pressure of the air in all directions, and ask, "If I fill a glass full of water, place a card over the mouth of the glass and turn it upside down, will the water run out?" He listens to the expressions of opinion but does not definitely accept either one view or the other, and then proceeds to question those who take either side as to why they believe themselves to be correct. The children being now thoroughly interested in the result, and fully prepared for the experiment, the teacher performs it and settles the point. In this way the experiment is much more clearly understood and remembered than if the result had been merely foretold by the teacher. The thoughtful members of the class are rewarded by the satisfaction of being right, and the rash or careless are taught a useful lesson as to the necessity for cautious judgment, while both are stimulated to further effort.

When children have been taught certain facts, and the teacher needs to gather up the ideas rapidly in order to pass to some further truth, the occasional use of "yes or no" questions, mixed with others of easy form, is often justifiable as an expeditious method of marshalling his points in order that their bearing may

be made out. It is not *thought*, so much as *rapid review*, which is here wanted. Ordinary questioning would be too slow, while the plan just mentioned is often to be preferred to direct address as giving more variety and brightness to the work.

Something might also be said for the occasional use of questions demanding "yes" or "no" with small children, where much encouragement is often necessary to get answers given at all, and these must be of the simplest possible character.

Alternative questions.—Allied to the forms discussed above are the questions which contain their own answers, and simply offer a choice between two things, as—"Is iron a hard or a soft metal?" "Is this green or blue?" "Is the sun a hot or a cold body?" As a rule, questions of this kind should certainly be shunned; for, apart from the fact that they involve no intellectual effort, no form of question is so likely to lead to guessing. Even if nothing in the question, or in the mode of putting it, suggests what is wanted, the child knows he will be able to give the correct answer at a second try, at most, and therefore makes a shot at it.

It is often amusing to watch a class questioned in this way. The moment the teacher has pronounced one of the possible replies wrong, out go the hands of those on the watch for such a chance; and, though they may know absolutely nothing about the subject, they plume themselves on having answered the question. Where such a method of questioning is common many of the children will make no effort themselves, and watch again and again for the second opportunity.

7. Reasonably difficult.—It is not all uncommon to find teachers, who know little of children and are unable to look at things from their point of view, asking questions which are far beyond the powers of those interrogated, and at times even such as would tax the powers of a trained mind to answer correctly. The difficulty to the pupil may arise from a variety of causes.

In some instances the question includes so much as completely to bewilder the child, even when the details are within his knowledge, and he would be able to give them correctly if asked for one at a time. He is unable to frame properly so long a statement as is required; he finds great difficulty even in discovering where to begin, and being unable to think continuously without help he is pretty certain to give a very incomplete reply, or to flounder his way through a sentence or two and break down.

"How is a glacier formed?" "Why does a stick appear bent in water?" "What becomes of a shower of rain?" "What occurred when Cæsar came to Britain?" "What were the circumstances in which William the conqueror met his death?" are examples of this kind of question.

Sometimes the mistake is made of asking for information which the children cannot reasonably be expected to give. In many cases of this kind the facts asked for are such as it is the purpose of the lesson to teach, and, although they have not been touched upon in any way by the teacher, he puts the questions in the hope of their being answered from previous knowledge. He is misled by taking his own past experience for that

of the children, and fails to see that what many have been for a long time perfectly familiar to him, or brought under his notice almost daily, may, from the different character of their surroundings, be quite unknown to them. Not only are such questions useless, but, if at all frequent, the failure to answer them tends to relax effort and to discourage the children, while the long pauses which are likely to occur take all the spirit out of the lesson.

It is easy to fall into the error described in the case of terms not generally current but common enough in certain districts. The following actually occurred. A teacher was giving a lesson on the *Manufacture of a Tea-cup and Saucer*, and after describing the various materials and the way they are ground and mixed, he said, "Now what is the white liquid made of all these things called?" As no hand was raised he proceeded: "Well, surely some of you can tell me that; what is the liquid called? Come, do think." Perhaps, in the district from which the teacher came, most boys would have been able to give the reply, but no amount of thought would have enabled those in front of him to do so.

Another common case of demanding too much from the pupil is asking questions which call upon him to give a definition, when nothing in the lesson has led up to it. It may seem an easy thing to answer such questions as "What is an animal?" "What is salt?" "What is a plant?" and so on. No doubt the child knows the things when he sees them, but to give an adequate answer in cases like these is a matter of considerable difficulty. He has not only to settle upon

the necessary distinguishing characteristics, but also to find the words whereby to express them in a neat and correct form; and this he ought not to be expected to do until he has been prepared for it by the foregoing teaching. Even then it is generally better to direct attention to each point in turn by a *series* of questions, and to work up to the complete statement as the final step. When a child is asked point blank for a definition he has not been taught, all he generally does is to give some obvious quality and omit the rest, or to mention an instance or an illustration. For example, a child asked "What is sin?" is pretty certain to give some such reply as "stealing," "using bad language," "telling a lie," "being cruel," etc.

If, when the teacher is about to ask for a definition, he would think what answer he himself would give, the question would probably be at once changed in form, or broken up into several; and, at least, he would be saved from looking upon the children as stupid on account of their faulty replies. Even where the definition is correctly approached, unnecessary anxiety is often shown to set forth simple things in a cut-and-dried formula, when really all that the child needs is clear ideas.

The story is told that a gentleman once asked a class, "What is a window?" and, after rejecting such answers as, "A hole in the wall to let in the light," complained of the want of intelligence shown by the children. On being requested to give the reply he expected, he hesitated, and then said: "A window is an aperture.....Everybody knows what a window is."

Exactly, but it is not every one who can express such knowledge in precisely the words expected.

In dealing with young children the mistake is sometimes made of asking questions which demand that a process of reasoning shall be gone through before the answer can be arrived at. Until the child's mind has been sufficiently developed it is impossible for him to give such a reply as is needed. He has first to be taught how to reason by placing before him two familiar things, directing attention to each in turn, then taking them in connection, and finally establishing a relation between them. Questions are here of the greatest use, but they must be of the simplest description; and even when these early exercises can be managed with some success, a conclusion should be reached through a *series* of questions,—not demanded as a single effort until the child can reason readily for himself.

Some teachers are very fond of asking a simple question requiring a decision, and then following it up with—Why? This is in many cases a more difficult exercise than is commonly recognized, and needs to be used with a good deal of discrimination. It may often be profitably employed in the case of elder children; but it should be borne in mind that to give reasons for a conclusion is generally more difficult than to arrive at a correct inference, and that consequently the question *Why?* should be sparingly used with little ones. A child will often, by a kind of instinctive judgment, arrive at the right answer, when he is quite unable to go back and state the grounds upon which he has based his reply.

Occasional questions beyond the power of the majority of the children may be used with advantage, in order to give the brighter members of the class a chance of putting out their strength, and to prevent them from growing listless and inattentive. Care must be exercised, however, not to take up too much time with the answers to such questions.

Sometimes, too, a hard question at the close of a lesson may be left for the children to ponder over and try to find out the answer for themselves. The point may easily be taken up again when the next lesson of the kind is given.

Young even suggests (p. 20) that questions impossible of answer be sometimes asked; as, "Where did Elijah die?" "How far must parallel lines be produced before they meet?" "To which of the two poles is Quito nearer?" Of course the purpose here is to fix firmly in mind the fact which makes an answer impossible.

As to whether the questioning is to be considered difficult or not will depend upon the circumstances. It is a relative matter, not an absolute one. The chief considerations to be kept in mind in estimating the difficulty of questions are the following:

(*a*) The experience, knowledge, and power of apprehension of the children.

(*b*) The mode in which the questions are worded.

(*c*) The nature of the mental exercise involved in giving the answers—*e. g.*, observation, recollection, judgment, reasoning.

(*d*) The extent to which it is assumed that the child

can express his thoughts fluently in suitable language.

(*e*) The strangeness or familiarity of the subject, and of the terms employed in connection with it.

(*f*) The way in which the questions are connected in series, the difficulty of thinking being lessened where each question leads the mind in the direction of the next.

(*g*) The state of the class—that is, whether the children are fresh to their work, or tired owing to previous exercises, physical conditions, or any other cause.

8. Varied in form and difficulty.—The teacher should be careful not to cast all his questions in the same mould or even to confine them to certain set patterns. Children soon become accustomed to a particular form of questioning, and this leads them to answer to a certain extent mechanically; while the work under such circumstances is liable to grow tedious and uninteresting from the want of relief. Besides, to frame all questions according to a few fixed models, no matter how correct these may be, shows such poverty of resource and want of skill in the use of language as seriously to detract from the value of the teaching.

The words used in putting a question upon a fact should not, as a rule, be those which have been used in teaching it.

Want of variety in the questioning is pretty certain to lead to a similar defect in the answering, and the pupil loses the benefit which comes from repeatedly having to express his knowledge in some new way.

Even when the same fact has to be asked for several times during the course of a lesson—as occurs again and again in practice—it is a mistake to use the same words on each occasion; for when the child recognizes that the question has been previously put he turns his mind back to find the answer he gave before, whereas a new setting of the question would have led to an independent effort to find the right idea.

When, again, a prepared passage from a book has to be examined upon, and the remembrance of the ideas or contained facts is alone important, the words of the text should be avoided in framing the questions, and as far as possible the child should also be induced to express the answers in his own way. Unless this is done the teacher cannot be certain that the child *knows;* he may give the correct answer so far as *words* are concerned, but have no corresponding *ideas.*

The wise teacher will vary the form and wording of his questions as much as possible; and if at first he finds himself unable to accomplish all he could wish in this matter, a little earnest practice will soon remove most of the difficulty. More teachers fail in this and in other respects from not knowing what to aim at, or from not taking sufficient pains to learn, than from any lack of ability.

Converse questions.—In employing questions for securing the repetition of some important point, it is often necessary to transform a question again and again, that the matter may be looked at from all sides, although, really, the information involved is the same in each case.

Thus, supposing the children to have been taught

that the atmospheric pressure under ordinary conditions is about 15 lbs. per square inch, the fact may be fixed directly by having the statement repeated several times, or better, by questioning somewhat as follows: "What is the amount of the pressure of the atmosphere on a square inch?" "Of what did we say 15 lbs. was a measure?" "If I take a square inch of the surface of this table what is the weight of the air upon it?" "What does 15 lbs. per square inch represent with respect to the atmosphere?"

With very young children this repeated asking for information in a changed form is often most valuable; the reiteration not only deepens the impression made, and so strengthens remembrance, but helps to secure that the pupils understand the fact brought forward, by giving them time completely to realize what it means.

The following is a very simple instance: "What was the name of Abraham's son?" "Who was Isaac's father?" "What relation was Isaac to Abraham?" "What relation was Abraham to Isaac?"

In class-teaching it is not possible to make every question suitable for every child, as though he alone had to be considered; but, in any continuous use of questions, they should be so varied in difficulty that, while the larger number of them ought certainly to afford useful exercise for the average members of the class, others are calculated more particularly to meet the needs of the duller or of the brighter children.

9. Connected in series.—The value of connecting information and of associating ideas of a like kind—of packing them away as it were in the right place in the mind—has been touched upon already. To systematize

knowledge in this way for the child, and link together individual items of information so that they have a combined meaning, is a matter of the most vital importance in teaching, and to secure its accomplishment no device may be more beneficially and successfully employed than questioning.

It is not difficult, therefore, to see how much depends upon the proper sequence and connection of the questions, and to recognize that, in putting them, care should be taken always to keep to some distinct line of thought. Each question should be based upon, or at least related to, the preceding answer; so that not only may the child be assisted in associating properly the various points brought before him, but, by having his attention turned in a definite direction, he may the more readily pass from what he has already acquired to that which he has yet to learn.

The preparation, however, should be of a line of questioning, not of a list of questions. To settle just what questions are to be asked is a waste of time, and to adhere to such questions is a pretty sure way of rendering the lesson artificial. In ordinary cases the actual questions should be left to the needs of the moment, so that each may grow naturally out of the preceding answers; and, even when some difficult point is to be reached by questioning, the most that can be usefully done is to think over a *possible* series of questions which follow the line it is intended to take. For a teacher, especially an inexperienced one, to have such a series in his mind as *suggestions* may be of great assistance, and will often prevent him from wandering. The questions themselves however are pretty sure to

be greatly modified, and may be quite changed, when the point comes to be taught.

Fitch says (p. 71): "We have often been struck, I dare say, in reading the newspapers, to find what plain and sensible evidence the witnesses all appear to give at judicial trials. We recognize the name of some particular person, and we know, perhaps, that he is an uneducated man, apt to talk in an incoherent and desultory way on most subjects, utterly incapable of telling a simple story without wandering and blundering, and very nervous withal; yet if he happens to have been a witness at a trial, and we read the published report of his testimony, we are surprised to find what a connected, straightforward story it is; there is no irrelevant or needless matter introduced, and yet not one significant fact is omitted. We wonder how such a man could have stood up in a crowded court, and narrated facts with all this propriety and good taste. But the truth is that the witness is not entitled to your praise. He never recited the narrative in the way implied by the newspaper report. But he stood opposite to a man who had studied the art of questioning, and he replied in succession to a series of interrogations which the barrister proposed to him. The reporter for the press has done no more than copy down, in the exact order in which they were given, all the replies to these questions; and if the sum of these replies reads to us like a consistent narrative, it is because the lawyer knew how to marshal his facts beforehand, had the skill to determine what was necessary, and what was not necessary, to the case in hand, and to propose his questions so as to draw out, even

from a confused and bewildered mind, a coherent statement of facts. We may take a hint, I think, from the practice of the bar in this respect; and, especially in questioning by way of examination, we may remember that the answers of the children, if they could be taken down at the moment, ought to form a complete, orderly, and clear summary of the entire contents of the lesson."

Rambling questioning prevents continuous thinking on the part of the child, and often leaves him confounded, not because the question is beyond his power or knowledge, if it had been properly led up to, but on account of the broken and zigzag course pursued by the teacher.

Some teachers have a most unfortunate method of trying to avoid a pause, if the next point does not occur to them, or they are at a loss for a word. This is to ask a question abruptly about something dealt with earlier in the lesson; so that, while the children are expecting to go forward, they are suddenly called upon to turn their attention to some matter completely dissociated from that under consideration.

Examination questions are naturally more discursive than those used during the teaching; but even here there should be a definite order in which the points are again brought under the notice of the child, and the questions must be kept within the area covered by the previous teaching.

The steps from one question to another must be such as the children can take; and it is necessary for the teacher to be on the watch at all points that he

may make sure he is being intelligently followed. Unless he is cautious in this respect the connection between the ideas is likely to exist only in his own mind; and while the questions may appear to him to be consecutive and fitly framed to develop the lesson, the pupils, unable to take such long leaps, may be in a state of perplexity, so far as any relationship between the various facts is concerned. In such circumstances the teacher is very liable to credit to the stupidity of the children, rather than to the imperfection of his own questioning, their failure to grasp what is being taught.

10. Conversational. — The success with which questioning is conducted so as to be made attractive to children depends very much upon the way in which the questions are asked. Few influences are more stimulative to children than a cheerful, appreciative, and sympathetic manner on the part of the teacher; and this is especially the case in questioning. The exercise should be, as far as possible, like a pleasant animated conversation, and entirely free from the stiff formalism which sometimes characterizes it. Vivacity and pleasantness put the pupils on good terms with their work, arouse in them a desire to do their best, and prevent their flagging or becoming wearied of answering so soon as they otherwise would.

Many good examples of the "conversational method" may be found in books, especially in some of the best story-books for children; but we must be on our guard against that *sham conversational plan* to be found in the ordinary "question-and-answer books". In these there is no true dialogue; all the brightness, freedom,

and naturalness of conversation are absent; and the information is presented in an entirely artificial and often pompous way, which is as unlike the skilful guidance of the child to think and discover for himself as anything can well be. To call the method in such a case "Socratic", as some writers of these books do, is an absurdity which is only equalled by the ignorance displayed in such a statement.

The well-known chapter on "Eyes and no Eyes" in "Evenings at Home" is a capital instance of the spirit and way in which teaching by conversation should be carried out; and in the admirable dialogue quoted on p. 24 from the Rev. Edward Thring's "Theory and Practice of Teaching" the method is seen at its best.

Any means which will give zest and animation to the questioning, and banish drowsiness and indisposition to effort, is worth consideration; but at the same time the teacher must not put on a melodramatic air and *act* his part. The more perfectly easy and natural he is the better. Some teachers make the mistake of being fussy and bustling, which is tiresome and disconcerting; others of being stilted and magisterial, which is chilling and depressing; a few of being too exacting, and correcting mistakes in a harsh, snappish way, which renders the children afraid to answer, and eventually silences them.

Questions should be spirited without hesitation, but at the same time without hurry. If clearly given, they should not be repeated again and again, as is often done, in the teacher's anxiety to obtain answers quickly. This repetition of the question, frequently with the added behest to think, defeats its own pur-

pose, and so far from assisting the child, simply embarrasses him.

To put the questions in a slow, dull, or drawling way, as though the teacher himself found the work tedious, and, it may be, with long pauses while he considers what he shall ask next, naturally damps out interest in answering, and rapidly leads to weariness and inattention.

The tone of voice should be bright and encouraging, and the words should be given with sufficient deliberation and force for every child to hear with ease. When very considerable effort is necessary to catch the words of the question, this is so much energy withdrawn from the answering.

11. Well distributed over both the lesson and the class. —The employment of questioning is no exception to the rule that a method should not be used so exclusively and persistently as to weary the children by the monotony of the exercise; but, this being kept in mind, questions may with advantage be introduced at any point, and into any subject where they can be made to accomplish effectively and quickly what is required. Questioning should be so woven into the teaching that, while continually employed as an auxiliary to other devices, its more deliberate and specific use as a distinct method should be judiciously distributed over the lesson.

It is sometimes said that nothing should be told to a child which it is possible for him, with the aid of questioning, to discover. This is an over-statement of the case which is calculated to do more harm than

good, and to destroy that faith in the value of the device properly employed which every teacher should have. Where the discovery cannot be made without unreasonable difficulty, or an extravagant expenditure of time, questioning should be abandoned for some method less exacting and more direct. The point for consideration is not whether the information can be arrived at by the greatest exercise of ingenuity, and after a large number of attempts, but whether questioning is the best means, all things considered, for fixing the facts with certainty and intelligence in the minds of the children.

The best general way of asking a question is to address the whole class, on the understanding that all who can answer are to hold up one hand, and then to select one or more pupils to give the reply. Much good judgment may be shown in the way this selection is made. If the question is an easy one, it may well be answered by the less able members of the class; but if it is fairly difficult it is, *as a rule*, better to allow some child to answer who may reasonably be expected to do so correctly. Those, however, who show any sign of inattention should be frequently challenged, and in some cases called upon to repeat the question. The main thing is to keep the thing lesson "going", and to secure that every child shall be on the alert. For this reason the question should always be asked before the pupil to answer is called upon. Each one should feel that he is liable to be called upon at any moment, and that directly he begins to gaze about, or in any way to show that he is not properly attending to what is being said, he is almost certain to be chosen by the

teacher to give an answer. The stolid look and the dull eye soon betray to the watchful teacher when the child is not learning.

The greater ease and quickness with which answers may be obtained from the brighter children is a great temptation to the teacher to overlook the duller and more ignorant ones during questioning. He should bear this carefully in mind, in order that the latter may receive their full share of attention; but, in his anxiety to do the best that is possible for such children, he must not fall into the opposite error of directing to them a greater proportion of the questions than is their due, and so of neglecting the needs of those who are able to move more rapidly. Occasionally, and in special circumstances, it is a good plan for the sake of variety to go round the class with a series of questions, calling upon each boy in turn to answer one; this plan, however, should not be generally adopted.

If properly treated children are easily interested, and soon become inquisitive about any subject which is made attractive to them. When quite at their ease, and in sympathy with the teacher, it is therefore perfectly natural for them to ask questions; so much so that a child has been called "an animated interrogation point". This questioning of the teacher by the children, if kept within proper limits, is a thing to be distinctly encouraged, especially with little ones; and if managed at all skilfully will not only banish all idea of lesson drudgery from the minds of the children, but also afford the teacher just the opportunities he wants for putting his own questions in return. In fact, in many cases, by a series of well-directed questions the

child may be made, greatly to his satisfaction, to find the answer to his own question. Any honest seeking for further information, or statement of a real difficulty, should be listened to patiently, and answered in the most fitting way which the teacher's knowledge and circumstances allow. A little management on his part will soon ensure that the questions asked are kept within the limits of the subject in hand, and are not put merely for the sake of asking. Any inquiry which is useful in itself but which has no direct bearing on the lesson may, if more than a word or two are required, be easily answered at some more suitable opportunity.

Sometimes it is useful, as a relief from routine work, to allow children to question one another. One boy stands up and the others ask him any questions they please on the lesson, or the subject selected, the teacher indicating the order in which this is to be done. If the one questioned fails to reply correctly, the questioner, after giving the right answer, takes his place, until he in turn is deposed, and so on. Children in such circumstances often display great acuteness and ingenuity in framing questions, and the exercise affords a useful training in smartness and readiness of reply; while at the same time it encourages confidence and independence of view. It almost always excites the keenest interest, and the children are generally refreshed by it; the questioning, however, is naturally of too desultory a character to be employed otherwise than as a relaxation.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITIES AND TREATMENT OF ANSWERS

If the child is to gain all the benefit which should result from his being questioned correctly it is quite as important for the teacher to attend to the answers given as to the mode of questioning. This is not always recognized, at least in practice, the teacher apparently feeling that if the question has been properly put the faultiness of the replies is entirely due to the children. The nature, however, of the answering will be pretty much what the teacher makes it; and not only will it often be impossible for him to frame his questions in the most suitable way unless the answers are properly considered, but neglect on his part in this matter will tell most prejudicially upon the intellectual habits and training of the children. If on the other hand they see that no carelessness is ever passed over, and that the teacher will not rest content with anything less than the best they can give, they naturally soon learn to answer, at least passably, in the way required. Questioning and answering act and react upon one another, and neither is likely to be what it should be when the teacher is content with a low standard in the other.

1. Good answers.—The chief things to be aimed at in good answering are, readiness in finding the right

ideas, and aptness in putting them into the form of words that will best make them clear to others. In many cases it is evident that the child knows what is asked of him, but is unable, from the limited nature of his vocabulary and his defective experience in the use of words, to state exactly what he means. To answer a question well in all respects is often far from an easy matter; and it is not to be expected, even with the most careful handling, that all the answers of children can be made to come up to a theoretically satisfactory standard. Much, nevertheless, may be done in this respect if the teacher is alive to what should be required, and gives in a kindly and judicious manner such help as is needed.

The way in which the teacher deals with the answers given will, if he adopts the right course, soon make evident to the children what they should aim at, and will encourage them to take pains in stating properly what they know.

Good answers should be:

(*a*) **Exact** as far as they go—showing that the pupil recognizes the point of the question, and endeavors to give clearly and precisely what he believes to be wanted. Truth and error are often strangely mixed in the answers of children, but if there is no doubt as to which is which, such replies are easily dealt with. The greater difficulty, however, is the haziness of conception, and consequent vagueness of answering, which results from half-formed ideas and leaves it uncertain to what extent the child is right or wrong in what he says. This indefiniteness the teacher should do his best to banish.

(*b*) **Complete.**—The answer should be expressed with sufficient fulness to be intelligible to the class, and should give all that the question asks, but nothing else. Unless the teacher is heedful in this matter, the child, either from indolence or carelessness, will in many cases merely hint at the reply instead of stating it, flinging in a word or two and leaving the rest to be imagined. It may be evident that his knowledge is not at fault; that is not enough; he must be made to state what he has to say with as much completeness as he is capable of.

Partial answers, if correct as far as they go and properly expressed, must frequently be accepted; and in such cases the missing information should be supplied by other pupils until the complete statement is arrived at. But, generally speaking, when this has been done, the pupil first called upon should be made to give the full reply.

It is sometimes urged that all answers should be sentences, single words or short phrases not being allowed. In answering questions *in writing* this no doubt should be adhered to, but whether it is wise to insist upon it *in teaching* will depend almost entirely upon the nature of the questions. There are, of course, many cases—more particularly with elder children, and where thought is appealed to rather than memory—in which nothing short of a complete reply should be accepted; but to compel children always to give answers so expressed as to be intelligible without the question, especially where the object is merely to test the remembrance of certain facts, would destroy the spirit of the exercise and render it slow, formal, and tedious.

Good as the discipline referred to may be in the abstract, practical needs here often outweigh theoretical considerations, and no hard and fast rule should be adhered to in the matter. After all it is really a question of good judgment on the part of the teacher.

Whenever prepositions precede *whom*, *which*, or *what* in the question, they should however be always expressed in the answer; as, "By what right did John succeed to the throne?" "By the will of his brother Richard." (Young, p. 24.)

(*c*) **Exact.**—When answering is properly managed it is not only a training in exactness of thought, but also affords valuable exercise in the use of language; and further, gives children confidence and ease in putting their thoughts before others. What is required should be stated directly, in grammatically correct form, and in such a way that the substance of the reply may be readily grasped by all the members of the class. Clearness of meaning and neatness of expression are features in answering which it is worth while to take a great deal of trouble to secure; and this not so much from the increased excellence of the answer—though that is an important thing in itself—as from the thought and judgment which the qualities just mentioned involve before the reply can be fully given.

Of course, when testing questions are used more especially for the purpose of recapitulation, the answers should be known, and, as they usually demand only few words, rapidity of reply in most cases may be reasonably expected; but, in answering more difficult questions, if the child is to be thoughtful, and consider how best he may put into words what he has to say,

he must not be hurried or distracted by his surroundings. Hurry lies at the root of many defects in learning; and to it the blunders and badly expressed replies of children are due in a far larger measure than is commonly realized. It is one of the defects of class questioning that the competitive element—useful as it is in other ways—tends to encourage hasty answering. The pupil, naturally eager not to be behind his neighbors, does not give himself time to be certain and exact; and consequently his answers, even within his knowledge and power, are very apt to be rambling and clumsy, if not unintelligible.

For the teacher to pause long enough before accepting a reply to give time for thought is useful; but this only partially meets the case, for the child, constrained by seeing other hands go up, puts out his own the moment anything like an answer occurs to him; and no matter how much time is given after this, his attention is fixed upon the teacher, and he does not reconsider or try to amend his first rough draft of a reply. Something may also be effected in the way of cure by commending deserving answers from the more steady and cautious children, and by refusing to accept ill-considered and badly-worded replies. These the answerers may well be compelled to re-express, whenever it can be done without unduly delaying the teaching.

Simplicity of wording is a thing to be distinctly encouraged. Sometimes from love of display, a pupil will use big words or pretentious phrases, which, in all likelihood, he very imperfectly understands. Such attempts should meet with no favor from the teacher;

and occasionally it may be well to point out how much better the answer would have been if given in a simpler form.

Children have to take in information through the teacher's words; they should be encouraged to give it back again in their own. The re-expression of information in their own terms is the best test of understanding, and often throws light upon the way in which they most naturally regard things. Except where the word-form is important—as in a quotation, definition, or the statement of a scientific law—the child should feel, from the way in which the teacher accepts the answers, that originality of wording is looked upon by him as an additional excellence to correctness of idea.

(*d*) **Prompt.**—The rapidity with which answers should be accepted, as we have just seen, will depend upon the nature of the questions. So long as the replies are satisfactory, the more promptly they are given the better. Smartness and interest generally go together and stimulate the child to further effort. The welfare of the class as a whole, however, must not be sacrificed to the quickness of a few. Reasonable time must be given for the children to collect their ideas and put them in order; but this being granted, there must be no sluggishness or loitering in giving the answer, no bungling hesitation and hazarding of guesses, and no looking to one another for some suggestion to put them on the right track.

In answering upon what has been previously given in the lesson the readiness with which the learners

answer is generally an indication as to how far the teaching has been grasped with success.

Such rules as that the children should rise when giving an answer may often be suspended for the sake of greater rapidity of replies.

(*e*) **Distinctly given**—in the natural tone of voice and with sufficient deliberation and clearness to be heard without effort by all concerned. The teacher should not allow the children to give their replies in such an indistinct and mumbling way that only a word here and there can be caught. On the other hand they should be taught that to be heard requires distinctness of articulation—not shouting.

2. Bad answers.—In addition to the several faulty modes of answering already incidentally referred to, there are others of even more pronounced character to which the teacher's attention should be directed.

(*a*) **Guessing** is one of the commonest as well as one of the most harmful types of bad answering. The child often makes no effort to think or discover the correct reply, but heedlessly hazards an answer, or it may be several one after another, on the mere chance of being right. The evil of allowing children to fall into the way of thus gambling with words is serious; and the practice should be discouraged at all points in any reasonable way that may offer itself. No understanding accompanies the guess even when correct; and frequently the replies given are so senseless as to show that the child is not even conscious of the import of what he is saying. This is "disrespectful to the teacher and a nuisance to the class."

In some instances the defect of the answer may be shown by a further question; in others the absurdity of the reply should be distinctly exposed, while any gross case should be met by a direct reprimand. A little wholesome ridicule also, if wisely applied, will prove frequently of considerable service.

The teacher who shuts his eyes to guessing is really helping to foster habits of carelessness and rash statement altogether opposed to true educational influences. Not only does the child in such circumstances lose the good which the questioning should secure to him, but the bad effects of the practice are manifested in many ways, and extend beyond the period of school life.

(*b*) **Reckless answering** is closely allied to guessing. The child simply jumps at a conclusion, or blurts out probably the first idea that enters his head, without taking the trouble to settle how far the answer is correct. Oftentimes if the teacher pauses and puts the question again, in a way which shows that it must not be trifled with, the answer is able quite readily to correct his own statement. Such answers are not mistakes, but stupid blameworthy blunders, and they should not be allowed to go by without reproof. "Real mistakes," says Mr. Thring, "are one thing. Sham mistakes are another. And the learners ought to have the distinction sharply and strongly cut across their minds. A boy ought to be made to see always that what he *can* do he *shall* do...It is not the knowledge of the miserable tense or case, that is the question, but the slackness of mind that is so deadly, the trained activity that is at stake." The teacher must look to himself as well as to the children, for vague

questioning is sometimes at the bottom of the fault; and in any case he has himself to blame if such answers are at all common in his class, at least for any length of time. See page 38.

(*c*) **Careless answering** is another frequent form, where, in what Mr. Thring calls the "no answer plague", the reply given is not what is asked for, but some other piece of information generally allied to it.

Thus it is asked, "What is the height of Snowdon?" and the reply is "It is the highest mountain in England and Wales;" or, "When was the battle of Bannockburn fought?" and the forthcoming answer is "It was fought between the English and Scotch." "Who was the Duke of Wellington?" "He fought the battle of Waterloo."

In the great majority of instances, where answers of this kind are given, they are due to culpable carelessness, which takes one of the following forms—imperfect listening to the question so that only part of it is heard, inattention to what the question really asks, and heedlessness or indolence in framing the answer.

In other cases the child, not knowing the information wanted, is eager to show that he knows something else, and volunteers this instead. It is scarcely necessary to say that replies of this kind should be strongly discouraged. Such lapses, however, are by no means confined to children, or to answering in class; examination papers would often supply abundant and sometimes glaring examples.

The variety of ways in which what is given may be wide of the question is almost endless. It is not pos-

sible here to do more than refer to one or two further instances.

It often happens, for example, that children will go all round a question without touching the real point at issue; or give replies which, while dealing with the subject-matter required, present it in a form that is no direct reply to what is asked. In the latter case the wrong part of speech, as nouns for verbs and *vice versâ*, or the wrong phrase, is substituted for the one really needed to meet the question exactly. The following examples will make this clear:

"What is meant by alms?" "To give money to the poor."—"What is a sentence?" "Putting words together to make sense."—"What is meant by exports?" "To send goods out of the country."

The looseness of attention, inexactness of thought, and lack of effort involved in such intellectual sauntering are serious drawbacks to any real training being given. Children need bracing up in such circumstances, and the correction of the error should be unmistakable. In particular cases it may be advisable to point out in what respect the answers are wrong, and to explain clearly what is needed by way of correct reply. Anyway the child must be led to understand clearly that he must keep exactly to the point, and that nothing short of a direct answer to the question will be accepted.

(*d*) **Volunteered information.**—Sometimes a pupil is very anxious to display what he knows in the hope of pleasing the teacher by the amount of his information, and, not content with giving what is asked for, goes on to state other matters beyond what the ques-

tion requires. He should be stopped at once when he begins to do this; but not snubbed into silence, as is sometimes done. A judicious teacher will have no difficulty in dealing with such a case. One way is to call upon the child to repeat the question, so as to direct his attention to just what is needed, and then make him give this without any addition. He will soon learn that volunteered information is not what the teacher wants. Where the fault remains unchecked it will grow, and a good deal of time may be wasted, apart from other considerations.

(*e*) **Speculative answers.**—Some children again are very fond of giving speculative answers. They are aware that the teacher is working up some point, and, eager to show that they know what he is aiming at, they endeavor to anticipate him by giving the final conclusion instead of, or in addition to, the fact required at the moment. Such answers are often very troublesome, and sometimes spoil an important step in the teaching by bringing it forward prematurely. They are very apt to disconcert a young teacher; and it is not always easy for one more experienced to deal with them satisfactorily. The particular treatment will depend much upon the attendant circumstances of the case. The child, however, should be made to see distinctly that to gain the teacher's approbation he must confine himself to the question, and be taught to keep his discoveries to himself until the proper time comes, when they will receive that recognition which is denied to them so long as they are given out of place.

(*f*) **Ridiculous answers** are sometimes purposely indulged in. They are of course bad as answers; but

the lesson may be dry and uninteresting, and the children glad of any relief. It is not necessary to treat an occasional attempt at a joke as a breach of discipline; in fact it would be very unwise to do so, and, if at all quick-witted, the teacher may easily keep in order any offender, inclined to overstep reasonable bounds, by turning the laugh upon him. The main thing is to keep the matter entirely under control, and to prevent its delaying the teaching: it will then do no harm.

Where however foolish answers are given with the deliberate intention of disconcerting the teacher, or turning the lesson into a farce, they should at once be taken seriously in hand. The best way is to look upon them as gross rudeness and treat them accordingly.

3. Dealing with answers has an important bearing on the success of the teaching. No child should be allowed to escape contributing something to the lesson, and this to the best of his ability. The exercise should be so conducted, that while errors in fact or faulty-worded replies are not allowed to escape correction, the spirit is such that every one is stimulated to let no opportunity pass without trying to give what is wanted. Effort is the great thing needed, and this is not to be secured without encouragement. Harshness, impatience, and want of sympathy in dealing with answers, soon discourage children to such an extent that they remain silent, even when they know, either from fear of drawing down the teacher's scorn upon them, should they make a mistake, or because they feel that their best attempts meet with no recognition from him.

(*a*) **Commendation.**—Answers which are specially good and show that the point asked has been carefully thought out should be commended. In some cases a word of encouragement should be given, even when the answer is not all that could be wished, if it appears that the child has intelligently grappled with the question, and done his utmost to give a satisfactory reply. Where the answers, though correct, are not marked by any special excellence, and no word of commendation is advisable, they should be accepted in a pleasant, appreciative way, which will be in itself an encouragement to the child. A word of caution too is necessary. It is easy for the teacher to fall into the habit of constantly following an answer by some stereotyped phrase of approval, as "quite right", "exactly", "very good", "just so", "good boy", etc. This is to be avoided.

Sometimes the teacher appears to disagree with a correct answer, for the sake of teaching the pupil to be self-dependent. "How much is 12 times 13?" asked a superintendent. The boy replied "156". "Know!" thundered the superintendent, and the boys said "155". "Know!" said the superintendent again and again, and the boy kept guessing. Finally a little girl raised her hand timidly. "But isn't it 156?" she asked. "Certainly," said the superintendent. "But you said 'No'." "On the contrary I said k-n-o-w. I want you to *know* the answer is right."

(*b*) **Correction.**—Answers which are wholly wrong should be decidedly and clearly rejected. This should never be done snappishly or sarcastically, so as to destroy the spontaneity of the answering; but such

mistakes should not be passed over in a way that will leave the child in doubt as to their true nature. Honest mistakes are better than silent uncertainty.

It is not necessary that the rejection should always be given the moment the answer is received. Cases frequently arise where the child may be led by a further question to find out his error for himself; or the correction may be given by others. In the end, however, it should be clear to him where he was wrong. It is often a good plan, when a correct answer has at length been obtained with the aid of other members of the class, to call upon one or other of those who answered wrongly to give the right reply over again; or perhaps to put it in their own words.

(*c*) **Amendment.**—Many answers are a mixture of truth and error, and it would be a waste of time to pause in all instances and extract the grain from the accompanying chaff; but sometimes this may be done with distinct advantage both to the individual and the class.

Much depends upon the extent to which the answer is correct. In some instances it is sufficient for the teacher to point out what is right and leave the rest; in others the answer may be passed over altogether. Cases often occur, however, where a bad answer shows that the child has the right idea in his mind but has blundered in putting it; and here he may usefully be made to amend or complete his reply, others being called in to assist where he is at a loss.

Faulty answers may be frequently turned to good account by a skilful teacher; and a good deal may sometimes be learned by getting to the bottom of a

child's difficulty. But, on the other hand, if this is improperly managed, the children are very apt to lose the thread of the lesson, and to have their attention entirely misdirected by too much talk, and that possibly wide of the subject in hand. Discretion and judgment are necessary in this matter at every point, and the teacher must walk warily if he would avoid the many pitfalls which beset his path.

(*d*) **Repression.**—A bold, forward or conceited manner in answering should be reproved or repressed by coldly passing over the individual who exhibits it. Children should not be encouraged merely to outdo their neighbors; and a pupil who turns round with a glow of triumph to some one who failed to answer should have his power taxed to the limit of failure.

Anxiety to answer is in itself deserving of recognition, but it must not be allowed to indiscriminate calling out of replies. If this is permitted the class soon falls into disorder, and with bad discipline good answering is impossible. A boy who jumps up or comes out of his place in order to press his answer upon the teacher should, for that very reason, not be allowed to give the reply.

Especially should the teacher detect and expose the disposition to pretend to be able to answer on the chance of not being asked. Such pupils should be required to answer whenever they offer to do so, and kept upon their feet until their total disability overwhelms them with embarrassment.

(*e*) **Self-criticism.**—If the answers again and again are not forthcoming, or show a general lack of under-

standing, the teacher should at once exert himself to find out the cause, and look carefully to his own side of the work. The probability is that the fault is to be traced to his own want of clearness, defective explanation, or imperfect illustration in presenting the facts; or the weakness may arise from the mode of questioning. In either case the matter should be set right, either by going over again with greater care that part of the teaching, or by amending the style of questioning. The examples of corrected questions given by Young (pp. 55–65) will prove of much service. A device suggested by Young (p. 18) is to reverse the order, the pupils asking the questions and the teacher answering them; and this may often be used with profit, if the teacher is sure of maintaining his dignity. In like manner Fitch suggests (p. 78) that it will often be well to let the pupils question one another, especially in the upper classes. Pupils often gain clear ideas and better perspective of the subject by being asked to frame questions for review work. See pages 62, 63.

Sometimes, however, the cause of such a failure lies with the children themselves—arising from inertness, inattention, or weariness; or again it may be due to bad physical conditions, such as unwholesome atmosphere, excess of heat or cold, or too long a continuance in one position.

4. Simultaneous answering is an attractive mode of receiving replies, and in certain circumstances may be used with advantage; but both insight and caution are necessary to employ it properly, and it may easily become not only a useless but a harmful exercise.

Its advantages are that it engages every one at the same time, is stimulating to a dull class, is a rapid method, is impressive in force, gives confidence to the shy and timid, imparts animation to the work, and is a relief and refreshment after severer exercises.

Its chief defects may be said to be that it makes a show of work, and is apt to delude both the teacher and taught as to the amount learned; it smothers individual effort and fosters a bad habit of relying upon others; it is noisy, and if badly managed may interfere with the work of neighboring classes, or develop a sing-song tone that is very objectionable; while, inasmuch as the answers need to be simple and obvious, so that every child may have a chance and use the same words, it affords little or no training of any kind, and leads to superficiality and the glib quoting of phrases without any real understanding. "It may seem a paradoxical assertion," says Fitch (p. 59), "but it is nevertheless true that a group of children may appear intelligent, while the separate members of the group are careless, ignorant, or only half interested."

As a means of rapid repetition or recapitulation to fix certain truths in the minds of the pupils, simultaneous answering is distinctly useful, if properly employed; but as a means of testing information, or of teaching new truths, it is comparatively worthless. In the case of little children, where pleasantness and continuous occupation of an easy kind are the things needed rather than steady thought, and where a training in smartness and attention is more important than the learning of facts, simultaneous answering should be frequently made use of; with older children it should be employed

much more rarely. Where the exercise is used as a means of relief or change it should be dropped as soon as the end aimed at has been reached.

Vigilance and careful listening on the part of the teacher are especially demanded here; lacking these he may be completely deceived. Children are exceedingly quick in picking up answers from a few leaders, and will often chime in mechanically without even listening to the question. This is a mischievous habit and needs frequent correction, but it is by no means impossible for the teacher to overcome it; rather the fault is to be laid to his charge if it is at all common.

Children should be in no doubt when a simultaneous answer is required, some direction, or understood signal—as a wave of the hand—being employed by the teacher to give the required intimation. The noise also of the exercise should be kept down as much as possible. The children should speak, not whisper, and speak loud enough to be heard distinctly; but they should never be allowed to bawl out the answers in a high-pitched artificial tone, as is very often the case.

5. Common mistakes may be noted where caution is necessary to prevent the teacher from falling into error.

(*a*) **Particular form of answer expected.**—It not unfrequently happens that in asking a question the teacher has in his mind some particular form of answer. Unless he attends carefully to the *substance* of the replies, rather than the words, he may easily make the mistake of refusing good answers because they differ in statement from what he is expecting. So long as

the answer is direct, and is expressed with reasonable correctness, it is far better to accept the child's own words, than to insist upon some more perfect form which the teacher himself may be able to give. We want children to think; and if they do this naturally they are in many cases pretty certain to see things in a somewhat different light from that in which the teacher regards them. Sometimes the answers given are much more rational and acute than the one the teacher is trying to obtain.

A teacher once asked—"Why do the little birds build their nests?" and after refusing several really intelligent replies, expressed surprise that no one could give the one he wanted, which was—"Because it is their instinct so to do." This was a blunder in several ways. Compare the instance on page 49.

(*b*) **Answering unevenly distributed.**—Unless the teacher is observant he is liable to select the same children to answer again and again—usually either those just in front of him, or those who are most forward and demonstrative. In either case a considerable number of children have no attention paid to them and remain in comparative idleness. Over-answering by a few means mental torpor on the part of the many. When a child finds that he is rarely or never noticed by the teacher he naturally grows careless, and inattention soon follows. Nor does the mischief end here; for in such a case those timid and retiring children, who need to be continually encouraged and brought to the front, are entirely neglected. See pages 60–63.

(*c*) **Impatience** on the part of the teacher often

leads him to repeat the question again and again while the children should be thinking. They are distracted rather than aided by such repetition; and in many instances the teacher cuts the matter short by answering the question himself and passing on. This scrambling through a lesson is not teaching; and it may be laid down as a safe general rule, that except in rare cases the teacher should not answer his own questions. Sometimes, again, when an answer is not at once forthcoming, the teacher gives the beginning of what is wanted; and the children's minds being now turned from finding the reply for themselves, they either guess wildly or remain silent, so that word after word is added by the teacher until the answer is completed, or so nearly that all gain arising from the question is entirely lost.

(*d*) **Prompting.**—The teacher should not only avoid prompting the children himself, but should be particularly careful that where a question is specially directed to individuals the children do not prompt one another. When this is done in an underhand way it should be treated as dishonesty; but even where this is not the case it is a harmful practice. Children are to be trained to self-reliance, and this will certainly not result unless they are made to depend upon themselves. Unless a child has made the best effort he is capable of, or the teacher has passed him over, the others should remain silent, but ready to give what he has failed in.

(*e*) **Repeating Answers.**—Some teachers readily contract a habit of repeating mechanically almost every

answer given. This should not be done. The fault may perhaps arise from the attempt to gain time while the next question is thought of; but where the teacher feels it difficult to frame questions quickly it is better to pause than to fall into this useless and clumsy practice. If it is due to the belief that unless the facts are impressed they will rapidly fade from the children's minds, this is the wrong method to adopt—except in very special instances—to secure the object aimed at. Any really necessary repetition should be given by the pupils themselves.

(*f*) **Wasting time** over answers is another frequent error. This tends not only to destroy the interest of the teaching but to break the connection of one point with another. It is quite possible to be over-particular in receiving replies. To stickle too much over small points in the vain endeavor to make all answers perfect, and to discuss every possible difficulty and defect, while the more important matters of the lesson are at a standstill, is to confuse children by the multiplicity of the corrections, and to mistake the real nature of what class-teaching should be.

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The Art of Questioning.

1. The Art of Putting Questions. By W. T. YOUNG. Leatherette, 16mo, pp. 65, 50 cts. The same in paper, 15 cts.

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A simple and practical essay in pedagogy.—*Wis. Journal of Education.*

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The fault with the majority of pupils is that they do not think enough. Teachers are prone to make poll-parrots of them, teaching them only by rote, to repeat what is taught them, whereas all examinations and all questioning of any nature whatsoever should be such as would cause pupils to evolve information and gain knowledge. This desideratum depends on the methods of the teacher, and such desirable methods this book endeavors to inculcate.—*Evening Herald*, Binghamton, N. Y.

2. The Art of Questioning. By Sir JOSHUA G. FITCH, Inspector of Schools, England. Paper, 16mo, pp. 36, 15 cts.

This has long been one of the pedagogical standards recognized as of immediate practicable help to teachers. Among a multitude of testimonials we quote the following from *The Christian Register:*

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☞ This monograph of Sir Joshua Fitch's is published together with his "Art of Securing Attention", Huntington's "Unconscious Tuition", and Buckham's "First Steps for Young Teachers", all in one volume known as "The Teacher's Mentor", No. 9 of the Standard Teachers' Library. Price in Cloth $1.00; in Manilla, 50 cts.

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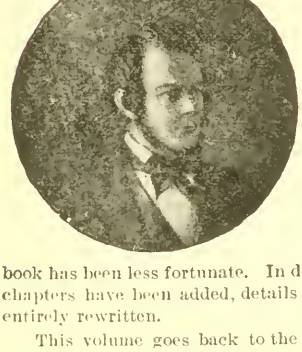

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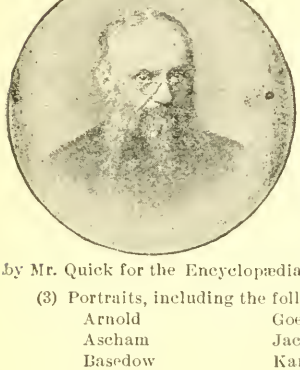

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